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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Heavy fighting was reported yesterday between US Marines and Communist forces in well-entrenched positions in the western portion of northernmost Quang Tri Province.

Sporadic fighting has been reported in this area-- northwest of Khe Sanh--since the enemy attack against a US Marine convoy along Route 9 on 25 April. American casualties yesterday were reported as 38 killed and 94 wounded, raising the six-day cumulative total to 78 killed and 197 wounded. Communist losses now total more than 130 killed.

[redacted] Viet Cong terrorists and saboteurs are planning attacks against selected targets on May Day as well as on 19 May, Ho Chi Minh's birthday. Around Saigon, they reportedly plan mortar attacks on Tan Son Nhut airfield and against the port area and television station. The Communists have often marked such holidays with an increase of terrorism and sabotage. (Map)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The draft presidential law submitted for adoption by the Constituent Assembly contains some apparently controversial provisions.

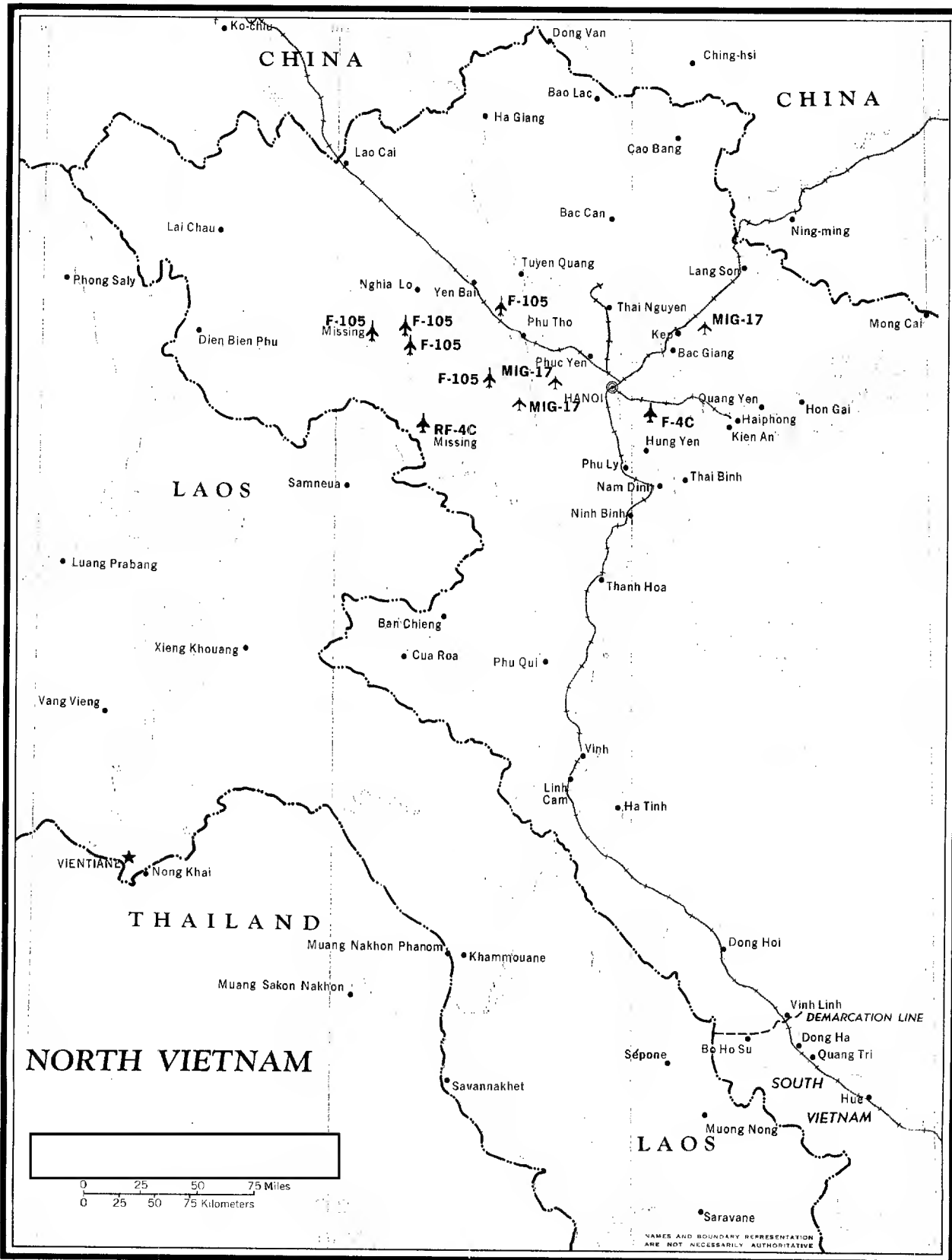
The provision for a runoff election if no candidate obtains a specified percentage of the total vote--reported earlier to have been agreed upon by the drafting subcommittee--was omitted from the final draft. The present stipulation that the candidate with the most votes will become president reflects the views of Premier Ky's supporters and may prove objectionable to deputies who feel it favors a military candidate.

Another provision requires candidates from the civil service or military to take "leave without pay" unless

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NORTH VIETNAM: PLANES DOWNED



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they hold "popularly elected positions." The US Embassy, however, does not believe this will bar Premier Ky or Chief of State Thieu from running while retaining their present posts.

Finally, the draft sets the presidential election for "a Sunday in September." This stems from assembly annoyance at the government's unilateral action in scheduling the contest for 1 September, a Friday.

Military Developments in North Vietnam: Seven US aircraft were lost over the weekend as the Communists continued to step up their air defense in response to the intensified US air activity in the Hanoi/Haiphong area.

In an attempt to protect vital military and industrial targets in this area, the North Vietnamese on 29-30 April mounted their most sophisticated and well-coordinated defense reaction to date. In addition to extremely heavy antiaircraft fire and multiple surface-to-air missile launchings, large flights of MIG-17 and MIG-21 aircraft were encountered on at least six different occasions. Three MIG-17s were shot down by US aircraft.

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Greece: No effective opposition to the military coup has yet developed, but deep concern is developing in Athens over its possible end results.

Both liberal and conservative elements fear that the military take-over could result in a sharp split between the political forces of left and right which ultimately could work to the advantage of the extreme left.

Interior Minister Pattakos has told Ambassador Talbot that the establishment of a constitution drafting commission may be announced soon. He refused to comment on the time necessary for a redrafting of the constitution, but said the commission would draw on the experience of other states, including the US.

About 1,300 non-Communist political prisoners have been released, but more than 5,000--most of them Communists and Communist sympathizers--have been or will be sent to an island detention center. Press reports say the new regime has decided to dissolve the crypto-Communist United Democratic Left party, the legal front for the Greek Communist Party which has been outlawed since 1947. Plans are also being made to ban youth wings of all the former major political parties.

King Constantine appeared grim and uncomfortable during his attendance at Easter midnight mass, and the usual popular enthusiasm was lacking. [The next day, however, he was well received at the traditional Easter Day ceremonies.]

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Venezuela: [The central committee of the Venezuelan Communist Party decided last month to abandon armed struggle and adopt united front tactics.]

[Reports of this action, aimed at forming a coalition of leftist political parties in the 1968 elections, are probably correct, but press releases by the party indicate that considerable dissension still exists concerning the implementation and even the aims of this policy.]

[The dominant trend within the party for the past year has been for a return to legal activities in preference to armed insurrection. There are sharp differences in interpretation of this policy, however. Some leaders favor total and permanent abandonment of the armed struggle, while others prefer adopting a mask of legality to facilitate reorganizing the clandestine paramilitary apparatus. The central committee apparently was unable to reconcile these varying views, even though a majority of the leadership favors abandonment of violence.]

[Regardless of its new stress on legal political activities, the party probably will attempt to maintain a clandestine capability for armed action in order to forestall further defections by hard-liners.]

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Turkey: The split in the opposition Republican People's Party (RPP) further fragments the political opposition in Turkey and strengthens the position of the ruling Justice Party under Premier Demirel. Disturbed over the party's increasing drift to the left, 48 "center-oriented" senators and deputies resigned on 30 April, apparently because they faced possible expulsion at the hands of the "left-of-center" group in control of party policy. The split will also narrow the RPP's political base and may reduce its voter strength.

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